United Nations E/CN.6/2011/NGO/67

Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
8 December 2010

Original: English

Commission on the Status of Women
Fifty-fifth session
22 February-4 March 2011
Item 3 (a) of the provisional agenda*
Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and to the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, entitled "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century": implementation of strategic objectives and action in critical areas of concern and further actions and initiatives

Statement submitted by Mulchand and Parpati Thadhani Foundation, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* E/CN.6/2011/1.

10-68128 (E) 060111

Please recycle

Statement*

1. Established in June 2000 as a family foundation in honour of Mulchand and Parpati Thadhani, parents of the founders, the Mulchand and Parpati Thadhani Foundation has completed 10 years. Its geographic focus is the Indian subcontinent and its development approach is human rights-based. The mission and objectives are to support socio-economic empowerment of people who are disadvantaged due to gender biases, discrimination, poverty and capacity deprivation (lack of ability to meet basic human needs), lack of education and inability to access health-care services.

2. The Foundation, with its geographic work focus on the Indian subcontinent, especially targets poor, marginalized and disabled women and girls for their empowerment, in order to help them to achieve access and participation in all activities related to education, vocational training and health services, and to promote equal access to sources of livelihood and income generation through the formation of self-help groups and cooperatives, with equitable opportunities to achieve decent paid employment.

3. To achieve the stated mission, the Foundation provides grants, training, consultancy and microcredit to facilitate socio-educational and economic empowerment. This includes focusing on issues related to discrimination and violence against girls and women. To date, 14 such development projects have been supported, including one in Bangladesh. All projects related to disabilities, health, education and economic empowerment have had a special and required focus on gender empowerment and equality in accessing services.

4. The Foundation has developed five training modules carried out in India. Three of the training modules are relevant to and clearly focus on issues related to the theme of the fifty-fifth session of the Commission on the Status of Women.

- The module on human rights education and learning focuses on a conceptual understanding based on international instruments and national background, and focuses on the development process of marginalized people, by poverty/capacity deprivation, health/disability and gender biases in the Indian subcontinent. The 2-3 day module is interactive and includes problem-solving groups/exercises.

- The module on empowering women, human rights and gender equality within a universal and Indian context focuses on a conceptual understanding based on international instruments (e.g., the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and Beijing Platform for Action) and the Indian background. The objective of this 2-3 day training module is to provide tools for overcoming obstacles to achieving gender equality and improving the lives of girls, women and their families.

- The 2-3 day module on the Millennium Development Goals, the Indian subcontinent and poverty focuses on a conceptualization of the Goals. The objective is for stakeholders to develop an understanding of all of the Goals and related targets, and conceptualize, integrate, advocate and influence the targets that feed into the larger development agenda in India through public

* Issued without formal editing.

policy forums. The vision is that all eight Goals must be looked at in an integrated fashion by Governments, and that the general public must learn about the Goals and strategies to achieve them. We also focus on the concept of a "millennium village" as a framework for our work.

- The other two training modules, relating to psychosocial rehabilitation of the mentally ill and program planning and proposal writing, have special dimensions on the rehabilitation of women with psychiatric disabilities and an inclusive project design to integrate the needs of women and girls.

5. The Foundation works with international non-governmental organizations, United Nations entities and other development partners, to network, collaborate, advocate and participate in forums, meetings and conferences throughout India and other parts of the world. Since its creation in 2000, the Foundation has moved from the "learning" mode to the "doing" mode.

6. The approach of the Foundation is human rights-based and focused on the overarching framework of the Goals. It has utilized different conceptual ideas to initiate new initiatives in its development work, such as the microfinance programme, the "Thadhani fellow" programme, the "tools for organization self-assessment" programme and the concept of the "millennium village", with a constant focus on gender empowerment, equality and equity.

7. Since the launch of the microfinance programme, all of our projects work with girls and women to enhance their capacities and abilities to engage in income generation activities. Two of our rural projects have promoted poor Dalit women's capacities to supplement family income through a milk dairy cooperative and goat-raising project for the sale of goats for consumption purposes. The two other projects focus on urban income generation activities for slum women and adolescent girls. Special mention should be made of our project since 2005 to create girls club centres in partnership with the non-governmental organization TRINITA. This project supports and provides training to 300 young girls, incorporating educational, social and economic empowerment. It also trains them in skills related to confidence-building and assertiveness, and learning practical approaches to deal with violence and violations of their rights in any setting. In addition, the girls receive computer training classes. The partnership between the Foundation and TRINITA has resulted in a group of girls receiving training (provided by the Foundation) to create small quilting products. In December 2010, the non-governmental organization will inaugurate a production unit (quilting cooperative), which will be further expanded to provide quilting skills to additional girls. Technical assistance and quality assurance-related services will be provided by a fair trade organization in Calcutta, making it easier to market the products. In keeping with the 2011 priority theme of the Commission on the Status of Women, the TRINITA quilting cooperative production unit incorporates all of the issues stated above.

8. However, the vocational training is not just limited to the development of a quilting cooperative. The participants in the girls club centres have learned tailoring and how to make soft toys, ladies' purses, jewellery and beauty products. They have also participated in an exhibition of their products.

9. Additionally, the review theme of the Commission is very relevant to the project and its objectives. On a daily basis, the girls learn not only about their

human rights but also about strategies to fight against all kinds of discrimination and physical, mental and sexual abuse.

10. The other urban microcredit programme works with poor women through self-help groups, and provides loans to engage in urban activities to supplement their incomes.

11. The Foundation will continue to focus on serious issues related to the rights and equal opportunities of girls and women, and their access to processes of empowerment, with a very special focus on right to livelihood and income generation activities in rural and urban areas within the Indian subcontinent.